



The President's Daily Brief

21 September 1970

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The situation in Jordan is discussed on *Page 1*.

In Cambodia, the reinforced government column remains stalled in its efforts to drive north to Kompong Thom. (*Page 3*)

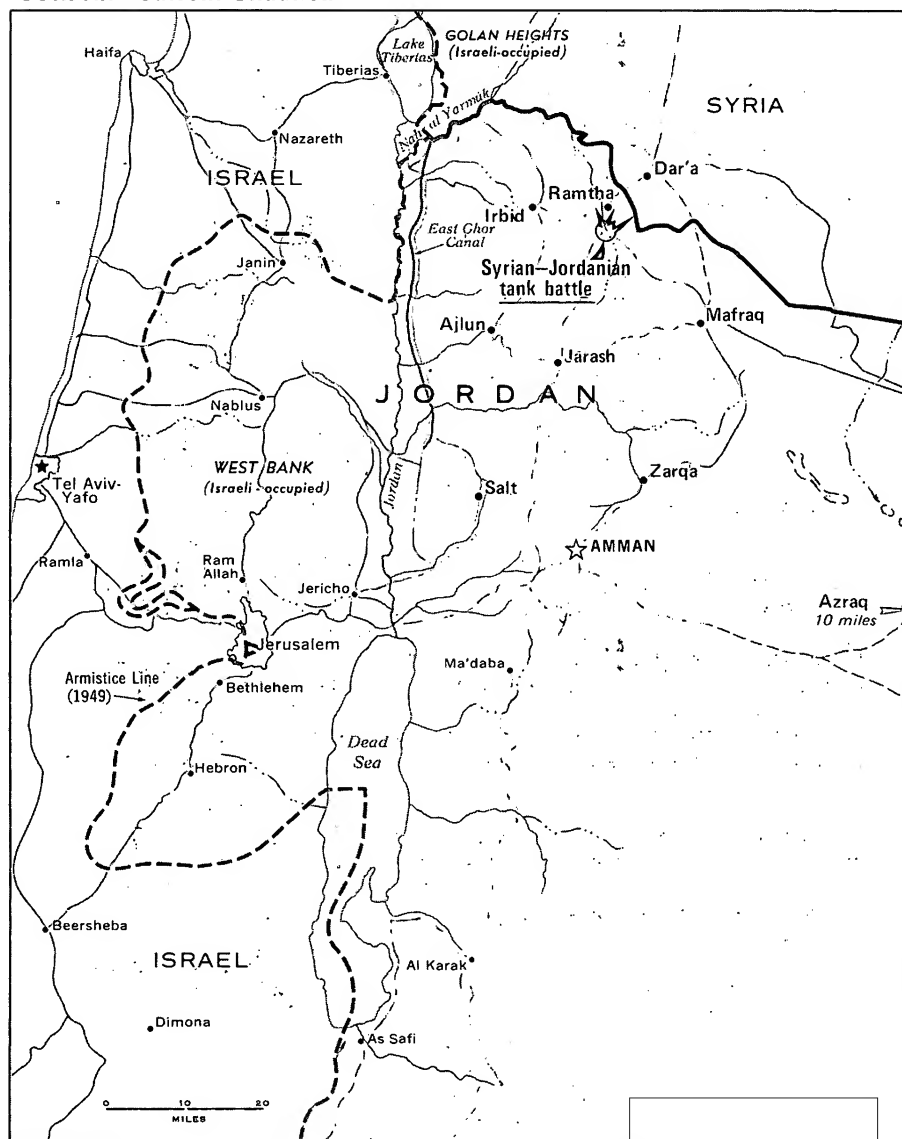
Peace advocates in South Vietnam are again moving to challenge the Saigon government. (*Page 4*)

In Laos, the Communists continue their hard line on opening peace talks with Vientiane. (*Page 5*)

Prague has publicly asserted that talks with Bonn are scheduled to open next month. (*Page 6*)

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JORDAN: Current Situation



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JORDAN

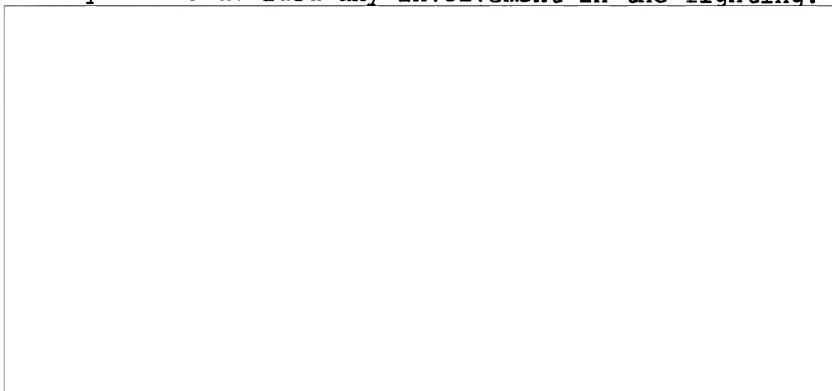
King Husayn has appealed for US military assistance to counter an invasion of Syrian tanks into northern Jordan. Early this morning he requested immediate air strikes on the Syrian forces. Later he added that although he felt an air strike would tip the balance, in the event that communications broke down the US would have his "advice and authority to land." The King asserted that as a result of the "massive" Syrian invasion northern forces were disjointed and Irbid occupied, with a "disastrous" effect on tired troops in and around Amman.

A Syrian armored brigade first crossed the Jordanian border at Ramtha yesterday morning. According to Jordanian Governor General Majali, Jordanian armor pushed the brigade back across the border after knocking out some 30 Syrian tanks, but later in the day Syrian forces made a second push toward Irbid. Jordanian armor engaged them at a crossroads about five miles south of Ramtha. The Jordanians have apparently also used Hunter aircraft in the fighting.



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Although the Jordanians are extremely nervous that the Iraqis may also intervene, so far the Iraqis have avoided any involvement in the fighting.



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Much of Amman, meanwhile, seems to be under army control. The army is using tanks against snipers, and heavy fighting continues in the area of several refugee camps. The army has been unable to get through to the area of the US Embassy.

The Egyptians are apparently continuing their efforts to bring calm to Jordan. They have told US officials that they contacted Syrian President Atasi and informed him that Egypt did not agree with Syrian intervention; the Syrians, however, merely denied that they had intervened.

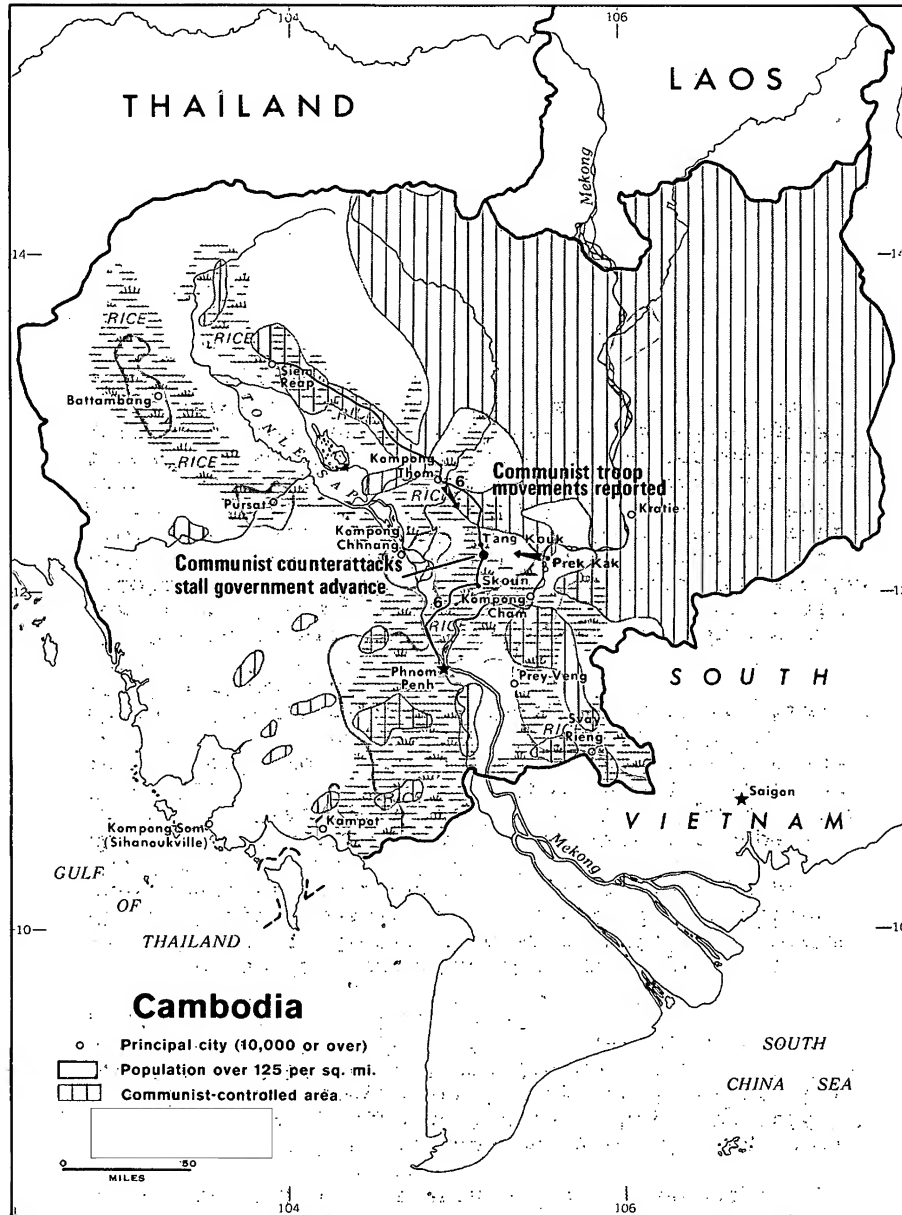
A cease-fire arranged through Egyptian mediation halted the fighting in Amman briefly Saturday.

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There is still no word on the whereabouts or condition of the hostages. Negotiations for their release continue; according to Red Cross representatives in Beirut, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) wants a formal US or four-power guarantee that Israel will release a certain number of fedayeen it now holds. The representatives believe that the release of the hostages could quickly follow such a guarantee, along with agreements between the PFLP and Israel on the prisoners to be released.

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Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

The Cambodian Army task force, faced with Communist harassing action, continues to put off resuming its northward drive to Kompong Thom. During the weekend the main column, about 13 miles north of Skoun, was subjected to several mortar attacks and one limited ground assault.

The government force, now built up to 16 battalions, can expect even greater resistance if it breaks out of its present area and approaches its first major objective, the village of Tang Kouk. Cambodian communications indicate that large numbers of Communist troops are moving from Kompong Thom and Prek Kak to reinforce elements of the Viet Cong 275th Regiment in its defense of the village.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

A prominent southern member of the opposition in the Lower House of the National Assembly, Ngo Cong Duc, has called for a provisional government to organize elections in an effort to get a peace settlement. Duc, editor of the widely read newspaper Tin Sang, is personally respected by many of his more moderate Assembly colleagues, even though they disagree with his extreme positions. His proposals are being widely publicized and are likely to trouble the government.

In addition, the militant An Quang Buddhists have sent a delegation to a peace conference to be held in Kyoto, Japan.

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So far, the Saigon government has maintained a hard line against independent peace proposals, and it has generally succeeded in discouraging would-be peace proponents, such as retiring Senator Don, from appealing to the widespread war weariness in South Vietnam. The success of the An Quang - backed slate in the recent Senate elections, however, may have encouraged both Duc and the An Quang to test the government's firmness again.

In the first official reaction to Duc's proposal, a government TV commentator said its advocates "have unmasked themselves as Communist agents." Some moderate politicians have also condemned Duc's proposal as beneficial only to the Communists. If the government takes harsh measures toward Duc, however, new frictions could arise between the regime and the Assembly.

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LAOS

Communist chief Souphanouvong has rejected Vientiane's latest proposal on the designation of its chief representative to any discussions on the Communists' six-month old offer to open peace talks. The government had offered Pheng Phongsavan as the personal representative of Prince Souvanna Phouma in his capacity as prime minister. This fell short of Pathet Lao demands for a personal plenipotentiary in Souvanna's capacity as a prince of the realm rather than as head of a government they do not recognize.

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Despite this continued verbal fencing, either side could still find compelling reasons to compromise. The government's forces are in a poorer tactical position than at this time last year, and could come under heavy pressure with the opening of the dry season next month. Hanoi, for its part, may be loath to enter into another season of costly struggle in Laos when it has more important wars to fight elsewhere. It thus may still wish a limited settlement that would lower the level of its involvement.

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA - WEST GERMANY

Prague has asserted that official talks with Bonn are scheduled to begin next month. Rude Pravo, the main party daily, cited unnamed sources in Bonn to support the claim. The paper asserted that negotiations should proceed smoothly because there are no territorial problems between the two countries, and because Bonn had already indicated its willingness to nullify the 1938 Munich agreement carving up Czechoslovakia.

In pressing for early political talks, Prague has in effect now jettisoned East Germany as a silent negotiating partner. The US Embassy in Prague notes that until recently Pankow had succeeded in blocking a Czech - West German settlement. Rude Pravo now predicts the "greatest difficulties" in normalizing relations between the two Germanies, and seems to recommend that Pankow look to the recent Moscow-Bonn nonaggression pact for guidance.

Although West German sources in Prague say that no official contacts have yet been made, there are signs that either government intends to take the initiative soon on opening formal talks. Whenever talks begin, they probably will not make much headway before a Polish - West German accord, expected in November. Bonn's Minister for All-German Affairs has publicly warned, for example, that numerous practical and legal problems remain to be resolved before the Munich agreement can be nullified.

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